

Message

From: Gonzalez-Rothi, Sara R. EOP/CEQ [Sara.R.Gonzalez-Rothi@epa.gov] Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)
Sent: 11/2/2021 7:18:21 PM
To: Fox, Radhika [Fox.Radhika@epa.gov]; Schafer, Zach [Schafer.Zach@epa.gov]
CC: Lee-Ashley, Matt G. EOP/CEQ [Matthew.G.Lee-Ashley@epa.gov] Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)
Subject: FW: EPA Directs City of Benton Harbor, Michigan, to Take Immediate Actions to Improve the Safety and Reliability of its Drinking Water
Attachments: ATT00001.txt

Hi OW,

This is AWESOME and exciting news (I think, right?)! Really important stuff. Brenda met with a group that included a Benton Harbor resident a few weeks ago. Would it be possible for this kind of thing to let us know so we can share with her before it is announced? We'd like to highlight the good work you are doing when we are able.

Thanks,
Sara

From: Ridgeway, Charissee R. EOP/CEQ
Sent: Tuesday, November 2, 2021 3:02 PM
To: Members EOP CEQ Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)
Subject: FW: EPA Directs City of Benton Harbor, Michigan, to Take Immediate Actions to Improve the Safety and Reliability of its Drinking Water

From: EPA Press Office <Press@epa.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, November 2, 2021 3:00 PM
Subject: EPA Directs City of Benton Harbor, Michigan, to Take Immediate Actions to Improve the Safety and Reliability of its Drinking Water

EPA Directs City of Benton Harbor, Michigan, to Take Immediate Actions to Improve the Safety and Reliability of its Drinking Water

Agency Sets Schedule and Will Offer Assistance to Correct Violations

Contact: EPA Press Office, press@epa.gov

WASHINGTON (Nov. 2, 2021) – Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued an order under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act to the city of Benton Harbor, Michigan, based on violations and

deficiencies found during a recent, joint federal-state inspection of the water system. The federal order sets out the steps necessary for the city to bring its water system into compliance to assure proper operations and to protect residents from exposure to lead. The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy is also taking a separate action today to address violations of state law as part of its ongoing state enforcement action.

“The people of Benton Harbor have suffered for too long. EPA is fully engaged and working to support the community, and today, we are taking a critical next step to ensure that drinking water is safe and reliable,” **said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan**. “Exposure to lead in children can cause irreversible and life-long health effects, including decreasing IQ, focus, and academic achievement. The water infrastructure in Benton Harbor, like many cities across the country, needs upgrades and investments to build resiliency and protect people from lead.”

The Safe Drinking Water Act provides EPA with broad authority to protect public health. EPA’s SDWA Section 1414 order requires the city to take several actions to protect residents in Benton Harbor, including:

- Informing consumers when lead action level exceedances are detected in drinking water.
- Improving the applications of chlorine for disinfection and orthophosphate for corrosion control.
- Implementing stricter requirements for better monitoring of residual disinfectants and its byproducts.
- Making filter repairs at the treatment plant.
- Using an independent third-party to conduct an analysis of alternatives for the long-term operation and maintenance of the system.

EPA’s involvement has been instrumental to driving recent actions to ensure people are safe and healthy. This includes working closely with the state and providing oversight and support of their efforts to address the immediate and pressing needs of the community—including providing bottled water. In addition, EPA recently awarded \$5.6 million to Benton Harbor under a *Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act* grant for lead service line replacement, along with a corrosion control study. EPA is working with Michigan’s state agencies, the City of Benton Harbor, and the drinking water system on medium- and long-term solutions, which are essential to ensuring the health and well-being of residents in the community.

Through its oversight role, EPA is also offering the city the services of a compliance advisor to provide direct, one-on-one technical assistance to the system operator. EPA makes compliance advisors available to small, under-resourced drinking water systems nationwide that may lack sufficient expertise.

For more information, visit: <https://www.epa.gov/mi/benton-harbor-drinking-water>

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